

## ความคาดหวังของนายจ้างต่างชาติที่มีต่อนักศึกษาไทย

ทองดี ชีวพฤษ์

### บทคัดย่อ

การหางานทำสำหรับบัณฑิตจบไทยที่สำเร็จการศึกษาในตลาดแรงงานปัจจุบันซึ่งมีการแข่งขันเป็นเรื่องที่ยากลำบากมากขึ้น โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่ง นโยบายการก้าวเข้าสู่ประชาคมเศรษฐกิจอาเซียน (ASEAN Economic Community) ในปี พุทธศักราช 2558 ของประเทศไทยส่งผลให้เกิดการแข่งขันในการหางานทำของบัณฑิตใหม่ในประเทศไทยมากขึ้นตามลำดับ งานวิจัยฉบับนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ในการศึกษาสมรรถนะของนักศึกษาไทยระดับอุดมศึกษาในการทำงานให้กับบริษัทนายจ้างต่างชาติในฐานะลูกจ้างชั่วคราวในโครงการแลกเปลี่ยนศึกษานานาชาติเพื่อการฝึกงานด้านเทคนิค (The International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience: IAESTE A.s.b.l.) จากการศึกษาโดยวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณและคุณภาพที่รวบรวมได้จากบริษัทนายจ้างต่างชาติที่เข้าร่วมโครงการแลกเปลี่ยนศึกษานานาชาติเพื่อการฝึกงานด้านเทคนิคจำนวน 110 แห่งที่รับนักศึกษาไทยเข้าฝึกงานระหว่างปี 2552 – 2553 พบว่า ความคาดหวังของบริษัทนายจ้างต่างชาติมุ่งเน้นทั้งสมรรถนะด้านวิชาชีพเฉพาะทาง (Specific Fields) และทักษะด้านการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ (English Competency) เพื่อการสื่อสารในระหว่างการฝึกงานของนักศึกษา

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## Meeting Employers' Expectation: An Analysis of Thai Students' Performance

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### Abstract

Securing a good job is tough thing for new graduates as the job market is being more competitive in the present global scenario. Upcoming ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), 2015 has overwhelmed Thai graduates as it may turn out fierce competition to land a job in their own country. In this light, this study has explored the Thai students' performance while working with international employers abroad during their paid internship through International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE). This paper reveals Thai students' performance quality from the eyes of the employers with the due focus on the working efficiency in their field of study and English language skills. The study draws its result by analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data from the 110 employers outside Thailand who recruited Thai students in year 2009 and 2010.

**Keywords :** Students' performance, Employability, IAESTE

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## 1. Introduction

The growing competition in the labor market in Thailand has become a challenge for new graduates. The competition may be fierce when Thailand enters ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015. A single market and production base in AEC is going to attract the free flow of skilled labor from ASEAN member countries that has forced Thailand to develop its labor competency[1].

A good supply of skilled graduates is essential for national, economic and social wellbeing. The failure to equip young people with employability skills has far reaching consequences. Technical knowledge is not sufficient for graduates to find or secure jobs; English language skills are also required. Therefore, many Thai universities are now considering the English language skills for their students. One way of preparing students for the workforce in the changed context is through internship experiences. Thus, this study is looking into how employers take Thai students' performance during the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE) internship abroad.

IAESTE is an international organization that has established its Thailand chapter in 1978 in association with King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok. Its mission is to operate an exchange program for technical experience (Internship) between members in order to enhance technical and professional development and to promote international understanding and goodwill among students, academic institutions, employers, and the wider community. The internship are exchanged with other members and co-operating institutions over 88 countries mainly on a reciprocal basis. Each National Committee is responsible for the administration of the exchange

in its own country [2]. Usually, the employers qualify the applicants looking at the applicants' technical knowledge and English language skills. Therefore, this study aimed to find the information about employability skills of Thai students from the perspective of IAESTE employers.

## 2. Literature Review

### *Employability and Employers*

There are many factors determining the employability of new graduates to attract the prospective employers. Employability is used here to refer to the ability of an individual to gain employment appropriate to his/her educational standard as defined by Dearing (1997) [3]. The literature suggests three key elements of employability, i.e. the ability to gain initial employment, the ability to maintain employment, and the ability to obtain new employment, if required, by being independent in the labor market (Hillage & Pollard, 1999) [4].

According to Ngahet. al (2011) [5], the employers' perspective, employability and work readiness are synonymous which both indicate possession of the skills, knowledge, attitudes and commercial understanding that will allow new graduates to make productive contributions to organizational objectives upon commencing employment. Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009) as cited in Ngah et al. (2011) [5] also mentioned that most of the employers looked for candidates who do not only have excellent academic performance but also possess good communication skills especially in English language.

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The employability skills needed for a job seeker were investigated by Zaharim et al. (2009) [6] in 4 Asian countries Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. It was found that the employers paid close attention to communication skills. English language proficiency was placed as one of the most demanding skills, especially in Singapore and Hong Kong. Ngah (2011) [5] also discovered that to what extent the graduates can apply their English skills in communication is equally important. According to Bott (1996) [7] that English Competency Test can help determine the success in future employment of the students.

The above-discussed qualifications obviously help meet the employers' expectation though there can be many other factors contributing for the success in future employment. According to need fulfillment models, employers' expectation can be fulfilled by the extent to which a job, with its specified characteristics and duties, allows an individual worker to meet his/her personal needs (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2006) [8]. Employers using such need fulfillment model will frequently use attitude or opinion surveys to gauge the expectations of their workers and how they are or are not being met.

#### **Purpose of the study**

This study aims to explore whether the international employers' expectation was met by the Thai students' performance. During the internship, IAESTE employers usually considered English proficiency and work performance as shown in Fig. 1 to assess the interns' performance.

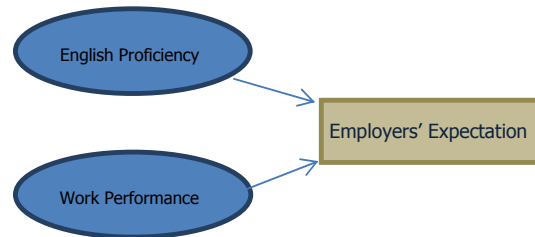


Fig. 1. Employers' expectation

### **3. Methodology**

To reach the aim of this study, both the quantitative and qualitative data were obtained. Questionnaire was designed to investigate employers' satisfaction addressing the relevant literature and expert consultation. The questionnaires for this study were divided into 2 parts: First part was about employer's satisfaction using 5 point Likert scale, and the second part included open ended questions concerning the required skills from the students. The questionnaires were sent to the IAESTE international employers who received Thai IAESTE students during 2009 – 2010. There were 48 employers in 2009 and 62 employers in 2010 from different countries who participated in this study. The IAESTE employers were both from company and academic institutions. The response rate to the questionnaire was 100%.

### **4. Findings and Discussions**

There were 17 company employers and 31 academic employers in 2009 while 24 company employers and 38 academic institutes recruited Thai students as interns in different countries in 2010 through IAESTE Thailand as shown in Fig. 2.

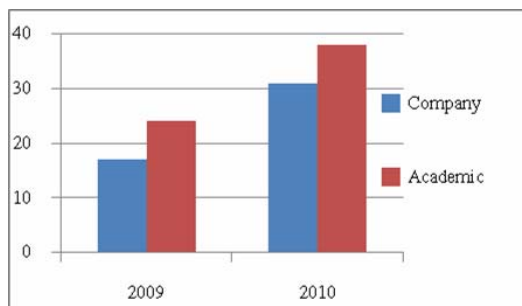


Fig. 2. The distribution of the employers

The satisfaction of the IAESTE international employers who received Thai IAESTE students is shown in Table 1 below. The satisfaction was tested looking into language ability, dependability, and relationship with colleagues, attitudes, ability to learn, quality of work and flexibility. With the overall performance mean score greater than 4 (5 point scale) in both year 2009 and 2010, it was found that employers were notably satisfied with Thai interns.

The result showed that the IAESTE international employers were highly satisfied with Thai students' overall performance, language ability, relationship with others, ability to learn, attitude and quality of work. However, the result showed lower scores in independency and flexibility in Fig 3.

Table 1: Satisfaction of employers

Satisfaction Criteria	2009		2010	
	Means	S.D.	Means	S.D.
Overall Performance	4.188	0.704	4.258	0.745
Language Ability	4.292	0.849	4.468	0.804
Independency	3.958	0.849	4.048	0.755
Relationship with colleagues	4.244	0.676	4.113	0.795
Attitudes	4.188	0.879	4.306	0.714
Ability to learn	4.042	0.770	4.081	0.708
Quality of work	4.188	0.673	4.274	0.631
Flexibility	3.958	0.650	3.984	0.712

The responses on the open ended questions, in the second part of the questionnaire, were analyzed to understand the performance of Thai students from the employers perspective and to identify the skills that Thai students should further work on to satisfy their employers. It was found that Thai students' knowledge in the technical area reached the level of employers' expectation. However, many employers indicated that Thai students need to develop confidence to accomplish the assigned work independently. Further, the employers pointed that Thai students should put more effort to communicate with the co-workers in the work place.

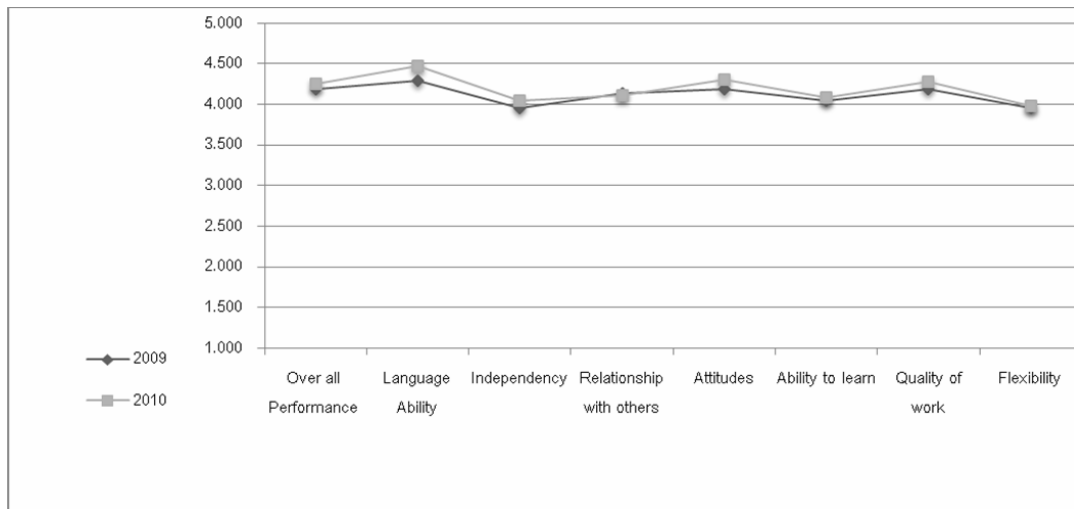


Fig. 3 The employers' satisfaction of Thai IAESTE students in 2009 - 2010

## 5. Conclusion

This study showed that Thai students met the international employers' expectation. Thai students' overall performance was good during their internship abroad. Their English language skills, ability to learn new things, relationship with others and attitude were highly credited by their employers. However, the study indicated that Thai students require to have more confidence to work independently and to establish effective communication to the co-workers in the workplace. Also, they need a skill to be flexible to adapt with the different working environments. To sum up, Thai students can survive the competitive job market.

## 6. Implication and Recommendation

In reference to the conclusion above, Thai education system should emphasize more on students' independency in learning. The curriculum should be designed in a way students could take responsibility of their learning and teacher should be encouraged to facilitate learner-centered

activities. More so students should be trained to adapt to the new people, culture and circumstances by developing the flexibility quality in them.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to the majority of Thai students as the students who got the internship opportunity abroad through IAESTE Thailand were students selected by several qualifying tests. It requires further researches to see if these findings correspondence to the majority Thai students, if Thai students are really ready for the AEC context in the future.

## 7. References

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